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ABSTRACT

"Making It Count," a multimedia computer course designed to be offered on public television for college credit at the sophomore level, was offered by the State University of Nebraska in 1975. The course was developed by the Boeing Computer Services. The course enrollment was 79, with 64 enrolled for credit. The mean student age was 36.5, and over half were women. Data from registrations and a student survey are presented in this course evaluation. Also included are students' course evaluations and academic achievement figures. It is recommended that they adequately reflect the course's instructional objectives, but no broader conclusions or recommendations are made because of the small sample involved. (Author/MSE)

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ED159968

MAKING IT COUNT
(First Offering)

Course Evaluation Report

Office of
Research and Planning

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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September 1975

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COURSE EVALUATION REPORT
MAKING IT COUNT--FIRST OFFERING

September 1975

This is a peliminary report on the evaluative data collected during the Spring-Summer 1975 offering of Making It Count, a course delivered through the State University of Nebraska (SUN). SUN, a project of the University of Nebraska, is a non-traditional open learning program designed to extend post-secondary educational opportunities to persons who find it difficult to access traditional, campus-based programs. The University of Nebraska is one of five institutions currently affiliated with the University of Mid-America (UMA). UMA is a regional consortium of the Universities of Nebraska, Iowa State, Missouri, Kansas and Kansas State and serves these institutions through three sets of activities: the acquisition and development of courseware for delivery in open learning programs; the planning, development and coordination of systems for the delivery of open learning; and research and evaluation which helps inform the development of open learning programs. As of Summer 1975, SUN was the sole operational delivery system in the UMA consortium.

Making It Count was acquired from its developers, Boeing Computer Services, Inc., and was presented by SUN with no major alterations except for some modification and additions to the tests and the addition of a weekly newspaper article. The course was designed to be offered on public television to a diverse audience for college credit at the sophomore level. The course assumed no previous knowledge of computers or computer-related subjects. It has been broadcast on public television since September 1974 and has been leased to 27 other American colleges and universities enrolling over 1600 students, according to its developers. As with other UMA courses, Making It Count is

a multimedia course which allows the learner to proceed at his or her own rate, and which encourages a support system of administrators, faculty and learning center staff to assist the learner.

Making It Count was offered by SUN for the first time as a 20 lesson course, broadcast at the rate of two lessons per week, starting March 3, 1975. Students were not held to the broadcast schedule, however, and were encouraged to study at their own rate, viewing lessons at the learning centers if they found it convenient to do so, and taking the tests when they felt most ready. As of September 1, 1975, 36 of the 57 learners originally enrolled for credit had completed all three tests. Three "mid-course" evaluation forms were sent out to each learner, after the broadcast of lessons six, fourteen and twenty. In addition, an end-of-course evaluation form and a supplementary end-of-course evaluation form were mailed to each student completing the course. A total of 34 (43%) of the first, 26 (33%) of the second, and 18 (23%) of the third mid-course evaluation forms were returned. Twenty-three (64% of those who completed the course) of the end-of-course and supplementary end-of-course evaluation forms were also returned. Because of the low initial enrollment and the fact that not all learners have finished their course work, the results reported herein must be viewed as extremely tentative.

In addition to the 20 lessons broadcast on television and available for viewing at the four learning centers across the state, the students were supplied with a text, Computer and Society, published by Science Research Associates (1972), and a student manual, Making It Count, published by Boeing Computer Services, Inc. A newspaper component, prepared by SUN faculty, also appeared weekly in the Omaha World-Herald, and a toll-free telephone was available for students to contact faculty directly, or to leave a recorded message 24 hours a day.

The two-volume study guide consisted of twenty 7 to 10 page chapters, one chapter for each topic. Each chapter included an abstract, or overview of the topic, a list of the objectives of the topic, instruction on all of the objectives, a summary of the major points presented in the chapter, a bibliography, and an eleven item quiz based on the objectives. The textbook was used as a source of supplementary readings.

Three 50 item multiple choice achievement tests were administered at approximately three week intervals, developed by SUN faculty with the aid of the UMA Office of Research and Evaluation. These tests were based in part on the fifty-items supplied with the course by Boeing, and on the objectives listed for each lesson in the study guide. Students took the graded exams at local public libraries or at SUN learning centers near them.

This preliminary report will present a description of the characteristics of the students enrolled in SUN's first offering of Making It Count, based on information from their registration forms, and from the Student Information Questionnaires (SIQ's) which were filled out and returned on a voluntary basis; a tally of learner responses to the items on the mid-course evaluation forms; and a report on learner responses to the end-of-course and supplementary end-of-course evaluation forms.

A Profile of Learners Enrolled in Making It Count

The following description of those enrolled in SUN's Spring-Summer 1975 offering of Making It Count is based on information collected on the course registration forms of the 79 persons initially enrolled in the course.

- 82% (64 persons) enrolled for credit
- The mean age was 36.5, with roughly a third of enrollees below aged 30, a third between age 29 and 46, and a third over 45.

- 53% (43 persons) were female
- 17% (13 persons) identified themselves as homemakers
- 40% (31 persons) were from the Omaha learning center area, 35% (27 persons) were from the Lincoln learning center area, 18% (14 persons) were from the Kearney learning center area, and 6% (5 persons) were from the Scottsbluff learning center area.
- 13% (10 persons) also enrolled in Consumer Experience, 4% (3 persons) enrolled in Psychology, and 12% (9 persons) enrolled in Accounting I.
- 4% (3 persons) identified their occupation as students
- 25% (19 persons) had enrolled in a SUN course the previous offering.

Forty learners (51%) enrolled in Making It Count completed the Student Information Questionnaire (SIQ). Although numbers of responses varied for each of the SIQ items, the following estimates were obtained about enrollees:

- 88% were married, 10% were single, and 2% were widowed, separated or divorced.
- 57% had mostly grown children, 24% had mostly young children, and 19% had no children.
- 5% lived on a farm or ranch, 15% lived in towns under 2,000 persons, 13% lived in towns between 2,000-10,000 persons, 23% lived in towns between 10,000-50,000 persons, and 44% lived in cities of 50,000 or more persons.
- 42% had not participated in a formal educational experience over the last five years.
- The greatest concern in studying with SUN was "Academic and learning problems, learning to study again, new methods, etc." (by 51% of the respondents).
- The statements selected most often as being the "Most Important Goal" from a list of 16 goal statements were statements relating to getting ahead in ones career or profession, or to preparing for a new career or profession.

Learner Responses to Mid-Course Evaluation Forms

A Mid-Course Evaluation Form was mailed to each learner after the sixth, the fourteenth and the twentieth (final) broadcast, paralleling the suggested

times for taking each of the three tests. The forms were returned on a voluntary basis, and the learners were asked to indicate their name and social security number on the form. The learners were assured of anonymity, however, and were told their responses could in no way affect their grades. The first, second and final forms were returned by 34 (43%), 26 (33%) and 18 (23%) of the learners.

Appendix A summarizes the responses of those learners who returned the evaluation forms as of September 1, 1975. Because of the relatively low number of responses, no attempt was made to compare individual lessons and the data are presented in terms of responses totaled across all three Mid-Course Evaluation Forms. In general, the respondents tended to rate the course as being "very good" overall, and the materials as "reasonably clear" to "very clear." In terms of difficulty, the material was rated "just about right" to "somewhat difficult." The majority of the respondents felt the pacing of the television, as well as the total amount of work required, (1-3 hours per lesson in most cases) were "just right." The material was rated as "fairly interesting" to "very interesting," and respondents were about evenly divided over whether they learned "a great deal" or merely, "some things." The large majority of persons felt that what they learned from the course was "important," the remainder rating what they learned as "very important." The Student Manual published by Boeing was perceived as the most helpful by far of the resources provided the student, (rated as "very helpful" on 92% of the forms) with the television programs ranking second in perceived helpfulness (cited as "very helpful" on 38% of the forms).

Course Completion and Test Performance

At the end of the eight-week refund period, 56 learners remained enrolled for credit in Making It Count, a total of 16 were enrolled for

non-credit, and seven persons had withdrawn. Of the 54 learners enrolled for credit, 36 (64%) completed the course by September 1, and three (5%) had changed to non-credit status, 16 persons (29%) having not yet completed the course. It is not known to what extent the remaining 18 non-credit enrollees completed the course, because they did not take course exams. The distribution of exam score data follows:

Table 1. Examination Scores for Making It Count

Exam	Possible Score	Range	Mean	s.d.
1 (units 1-6)	50	17-47	35	6.43
2 (units 7-14)	50	24-44	39	4.47
3 (units 15-20)	50	30-49	44	4.60

Course final grades were awarded on the basis of test performance. As of September 1, 1975, 18 persons had been awarded a grade of "A," 16 persons earned a grade of "B," and three persons had been awarded "C's." There were no "D's" or "F's."

Learner Responses to End-of-Course Evaluation Form

Following completion of Exam 3, and prior to receiving a course grade, learners received an end-of-course evaluation form designed specifically for Making It Count. Twenty-three of the 36 learners (64%) who completed the course by September 1, 1975, returned these forms. Appendix B summarizes some of the post-course evaluation data obtained from learners.

The course was rated overall as "good" to "excellent." Responses were evenly divided between rating the course as "fairly interesting" and "very interesting." The great majority of respondents felt "about the right amount"

of responsibility for learning was placed on the learner, and ratings of the difficulty of the course were about evenly divided over "fairly interesting," "neutral," and "fairly difficult." The most frequently selected difficulties encountered in trying to finish the course were "work pressures and responsibilities," "domestic interruptions and demands" and "self-discipline."

The exams were perceived by almost every respondent as being "about the right length," "fair in choice of content," "about the right difficulty," and "about the right number." Most respondents indicated they kept up with the TV schedule without much difficulty. Of the eight persons who reported a pressing need for course-related assistance from SUN, seven tried to get such assistance, and six felt they received the help they needed from the appropriate person. The study guide was listed as the "most important" instructional aid by the large majority of respondents, with TV ranking second in importance. Twenty-one of the twenty-three persons who responded indicated they were likely to enroll in another SUN course.

The supplementary end-of-course evaluation form listed three possible purposes for enrolling in Making It Count, plus an open-ended "other." Ten persons indicated their original purpose for enrolling was to receive "academic credit," eight persons indicated "career improvement," to be their original purpose, and five selected "personal enrichment." The "other" category was not used. All respondents indicated that their principal purpose was fulfilled. Nineteen of the twenty-three respondents indicated they almost always followed the sequence of activities listed in the study guide. All respondents felt the exams were returned promptly and were graded fairly.

Appendix C contains a list of responses to an open-ended question included on the supplementary end-of-course evaluation form. The responses to the question, "How do you feel about the course as a whole" can only be

regarded as very positive, sprinkled liberally with adjectives such as "excellent," "informative," and "interesting."

Summary

It is important to remember that the data presented in this report is based on only a portion of a very low number of learners and that conclusions must be made very cautiously, if at all. It does appear that the course was well received by the learners, with the study guide and the television carrying the greatest instructional load, in that order. It appears that the clear organization of the study guide, particularly the objectives and the self tests were appreciated. Apparently the textbook was the least useful of the major course components.

The fact that no learner indicated that the tests were too difficult or too long, and the fact that the test scores and grades were relatively high, suggest that it may be important to look closely at the tests to insure that they adequately and completely reflect the instructional objectives. This is not to say that high scores automatically indicate an inadequate test, but rather that they suggest the possibility of a problem.

It would be going beyond the data to draw any further conclusions. It will be important to gather additional feedback from future learners to adequately evaluate this course.

APPENDIX A

Learner Responses Total Across Three
Mid-Course Evaluation Forms
Making It Count

Appendix A
Making It Count
Learner Responses Totaled Across Three Mid-Course Evaluation Forms*

Questions	Mean Response	$\bar{x}$	s.d.
1. Overall, I would rate this part of the course as: (N=78)	1 Excellent (11) — 2 Very Good (44) — 3 Good (23) — 4 Fair (0) — 5 Poor (0)	2.15	.64
2. The material in this part of the course was: (N=78)	Exceptionally Clear (4) — Very Clear (28) — Reasonably Clear (46) — Unclear (0) — Very Unclear (0)	2.5	.60
3. The material in this part of the course was overall: (N=78)	Very Difficult (4) — Somewhat Difficult (32) — Just Right (35) — Somewhat Easy (5) — Very Easy (2)	2.60	.79
4. With respect to the TV broadcast schedules, overall pacing of this part of the course was: (N=78)	Too Fast (6) — Somewhat Fast (16) — Just Right (52) — Somewhat Slow (3) — Too Slow (0)	2.67	.67
5. I spent the following average time, including the TV program on each of the included lessons: (N=78)	Less than 1 hour (1) — 1-3 hrs. (57) — 4-6 hrs. (18) — 7-9 hrs. (1) — 10-12 hrs. (0) — Over 12 hrs. (0)	2.24	.49
6. Total amount of work required for this part of the course is: (N=78)	Considerably Too Much (2) — Slightly Too Much (12) — Just Right (59) — Slightly Too Little (5) — Considerably Too Little (0)	2.86	.67

*A total of 78 Mid-Course Evaluation Forms were returned; 34 after Units 1-6, 26 after Units 7-14, and 18 after Units 15-20

Questions	Mean Response	$\bar{x}$	s.d.
7. I thought the material in this part of the course was: (N=78)	1 Very Interesting (37) — 2 Fairly Interesting (35) — 3 Neutral (5) — 4 Not Very Interesting (1) — 5 Very Uninteresting (0)	1.61	.67
8. I believe that from this part of the course I learned: (N=78)	A Great Deal (44) — Some (34) — Not Very Much (0) — Almost Nothing (0)	1.44	.50
9. I believe that what I learned from this part of the course was: (N=78)	Very Important (20) — Important (57) — Generally Unimportant (0) — Almost Entirely Unimportant (0)	1.74	.44

10. How helpful did you find each of the resources provided?

Resource	N	1 Very Helpful	2 Helpful	3 Not Helpful	$\bar{x}$	s.d.
a. Newspaper	71	(11)	(51)	(9)	1.97	.53
b. Television	76	(38)	(33)	(5)	1.57	.62
c. Text	76	(13)	(46)	(17)	2.04	.63
d. Student Manual	78	(72)	(6)	(0)	1.07	.27
e. Learning Center	13	(5)	(8)	(0)	1.80	.68
f. Toll-free Telephone	17	(2)	(14)	(1)	1.94	.43

APPENDIX B

Learner Responses to a Sample of
End-of-Course Evaluation Form Items
Making It Count

Appendix B
Making It Count
Learner Responses to a Sample of End-of-Course Evaluation Form Items

Questions	Mean Response (Frequency of Response)					$\bar{x}$	s.d.
	1	2	3	4	5		
1. Overall, how would you rate this course? (N=23)	Excellent (9)	Good (12)	Fair (2)	Poor (0)	Unsatisfactory (0)	1.70	.64
2. How interesting was this course to you? (N=23)	Very Interesting (11)	Fairly Interesting (12)	Neutral (0)	Rather Uninteresting (0)	Very Uninteresting (0)	1.52	.51
3. This course places the responsibility for learning on the student: (N=23)	Much Too Heavily (0)	A Little Too Heavily (3)	About the Right Amount (20)	Not Quite Enough (0)	Much Too Lightly (0)	2.87	.34
4. Overall, how difficult was this course for you? (N=23)	Very Difficult (2)	Fairly Difficult (8)	Neutral (7)	Fairly Easy (6)	Very Easy (0)	2.74	.96

5. Principal items listed by learners as contributing to course difficulty, first selection only. (Number listing item in parentheses).

   (5) a. Domestic interruptions and demands
   (5) b. Work pressures and responsibilities
   (3) c. Self-discipline: getting down to regular work

6. To what extent did you keep up with the TV broadcast schedule of the course?

   (13) I kept up without too much difficulty.
   (3) I kept up pretty well, but with some difficulty.
   (1) I didn't keep up, but was never more than a few weeks behind.
   (2) I wasn't able to keep up and fell progressively farther behind.
   (4) I determined my own study schedule from the start and purposely did not pace my study by the TV schedule.

7. Number of times principle instructional aids were selected as being most important and second most important.

	1st choice	2nd choice
Study Guide	18	4
Television	2	14
Text	1	3

APPENDIX C

Comments of All 21 Respondents
to the Supplementary End-of-Course Form
Making It Count

Appendix C
Comments of All 21 Respondents
to the Supplementary End-of-Course Evaluation Form

How do you feel about the course as a whole?

Glad to complete such a course for career improvement, personal enrichment and as well as academic credit.

Broad base upon which expansion can be made.

Very informative.

Liked it.

Excited, happy, wonderful opportunity to make worthwhile use of my time.

I learned quite a bit.

I was pleased as it was very informative and covered a broad area.

Good introduction to the computer world.

Very good, interesting and informative.

Excellent! Very informative!

Satisfied.

The only thing lacking was some means of practical or first hand experience. Otherwise a good course.

Glad this was offered like this so I could take it.

Learned a lot of new things.

Pleased that it met my objectives.

Interesting.

I feel that it was well worth my time as I am more convinced of the great value of computers and their advantage to the world in many fields, i.e., business, science, medicine, architecture, etc.

I enjoy details and math related subjects also my work deals directly with a computerized operation. Therefore, I was glad for the opportunity to learn about our mechnical wizard!

I think I learned a lot about something that was a mystery to me.

I learned a lot.

Enlightening.